776 There is a large number of diverse spirits, and almost
823 every village has several in its territory Each one has its own habitat in some singular place or object which stimulates the imagination: enormous trees, oval hollows which form ponds of a sort (jémbo, pl. baémbo), steep slopes, extraordinary pieces of limonite, whirlpools in streams and rivers, etc

776 The Nkundó pray to the bilíma in order to obtain children.
842 For that purpose they make offerings of food and money. To test someone's feelings toward it, an elíma may come to him in the evening or at night in the guise of a known person and ask for some small present. Unhappy is he who shows himself to be stingy; he will be deprived of the object of his desire, or his child will be premature or born sickly or deformed.

783 In addition to taking a generally friendly attitude toward
842 the spirit, another means of ensuring his intervention is open to a
776 woman. She can procure some kaolin (eongo) at the spirit's habitat (a jémbo, preferably). In the evening she mixes it with some plants. She smears her abdomen with this mixture, known
[843] as isaá. She continues the treatment throughout her pregnancy; it has the property of removing everything in her which is of such a nature that it might oppose the spirit (ákékola lokeko jwá bilíma lóle ndá likundú).

776 Certain water spirits are known for their generosity, for
842 instance Itúmbálombé or Ekótalombé of Mpakú, [471] who is considered to be a female being. She goes on distant voyages to seek a supply of children. On her return she appears to someone and communicates the news to him so that he may spread it. But she orders all women who desire her favors to observe some form of abstinence. Sometimes she sings to amuse or calm the children On that day mothers must not use songs to pacify their little ones or to put them to sleep and can use only soft words for that purpose. Otherwise the child would die, for to do so would be to disregard the old elíma's kindness.

[787] Sometimes the spirits give signs of their blessing. A woman who is bathing on the shore just at the time a cargo arrives there will soon see her most intimate wish fulfilled. From forest spirits

843 a woman's mother proceeded with the ceremony in the absence of the husband and his family. The latter were furious. They revealed the matter so that if anything should happen later to the mother or the child the law would be on their side. In that way the husband could evade responsibility and place the blame on his wife and her family so that they would have to pay an indemnity.

The pregnant woman does not remove the paint for three or [301] four weeks after the ceremony. Nowadays the use of paint having [178] disappeared except for certain occasions and among older persons, it is left on for only one night. In addition the surface smeared has been reduced to a line in the middle of the head or even one single spot.

[183] During this ceremony the Bombwanja have a public confession [837] (etato) of the lovers. But since the Bokóté wait until after delivery, we will deal with it later on.

On the night following the ceremony described, the couple [833] [476] "fasten the fetus" through their carnal union. Were they to omit this act, the child would die before birth.

For subsequent pregnancies the fastening of the fetus is no longer preceded by the same formalities.

The couple continue to have relations during the entire [833] period of pregnancy "in order to open an easy passage for the child." 843 On the other hand, they must strictly observe marital fidelity. 837 Nevertheless, a polygamist may have relations with his other wives.

In addition to this essential art, the interdict also includes a secondary part; the couple may not even commit acts even very remotely related to procreation. Thus they may not:

1) Touch in any way whatsoever -- even to shaking their hands -- persons with whom they have had adulterous relations; such persons must therefore be avoided.

2) Sit next to such persons.

3) Look at them.

4) Enter a house or apartment where they are.

5) Eat "from the same pot."

6) Lie in another couple's bed.

7) Other persons may no longer sleep in the bed of the couple bound by the bokeka.

853 quantity of leaves, which he puts in his little basket called ilámbó.
757 If a leaf falls in the course of this operation, he must stop and throw away all that he has picked up to that point. The massage cannot take place on that day for it would cause the child to die falling and withering like a leaf. The father must start all over again the next day.

There are always two masseuses: one of the husband's kinswoman and one of the wife's. (1) They crush the leaves in

1. The Injóló sometimes permit a man to perform the massage.

[493] the same single mortar (eoka). The mother meanwhile must make her public confession, of which we will speak again in a moment. When the substances intended for rubbing have been prepared, the two masseuses begin their operation, which must be quite painful. The husband's relative takes care of the right breast, the wife's concentrates on [494] the left. (1)

1. This is a natural arrangement for our people; the term used to indicate "husband" (bóme) is undoubtedly etymologically related to the one denoting "the right" (elóme), and there is some likelihood that the same is true for wálf (wife) and ifili (left).

They energetically massage the breasts from the top to the bottom with the mixture. After a few minutes they test the milk by letting a few drops run out onto a burning fragment of pottery. If the reaction is normal the mother begins to nurse. If on the other hand, the milk curdles and solidifies (bacle bónda) like rubber, it is a sign that it is of bad quality because of the presence of an internal boil in the breast, called ítsf. In that case the knowledge and skill of a woman expert is called upon. The latter rubs the leaves of a creeper between her hands in order to extract

853 the sap, which she then mixes with water. The resulting liquid is
757 oily and foams like soap. She places a few drops on a piece of banana leaf and makes a sachet of it. She holds this against the breast for a certain time until the boil, similar to a blood clot or a piece of liver, leaves the breast and enters the sachet. She then shows it to those present. From then on the mother can nurse her child without fear; her milk has become healthy and normal.

2) The mother's public confession must include the names
837 of all the men with whom she has had carnal relations since the
853 child's conception. Other groups, such as the Injóló, extend this
684 obligation even to instances preceding that moment but which
783 have not been declared at a previous occasion. The confession is public. The masseuse related to the husband begins to crush the leaves to be used in rubbing the breast; as she moves the pestle and says to the mother, "Name a man." The mother replies by giving a name. The masseuse says nyongo, "indemnity." Then all those present say yengô, yengô, yengô, "absolved." Then it is the other masseuse's turn, and she interrogates the mother in the same way. The process continues till all the names have been cited. If [495] the mother cites the name of a man who is a close relative of her husband and who therefore does not need to pay an indemnity, the masseuse does not reply nyongo. Instead a member of the husband's clan makes the gesture signifying
[201] exemption: he holds the kernel of a palm nut (lolikâ) in his left hand and throws it by means of a small board which he holds in his right. Among the Injóló the man takes two kernels and strikes them against each other and then throws them away. Were the woman to suppress a name the child would die. If she has no admission to make, she replies, "No one besides my husband."

The indemnity that must be paid by those who are obligated to do so consists of a hen and a bunch of bananas (or their cash value) which are to be given to the masseuses, who will then divide them. Were the accused to refuse, the husband would demand a regular indemnity from him after the end of the seclusion.

The Bombwanja have this confession at the time of the
[184] fastening of the fetus. A few old women married into the clan carry out the interrogation. The kernel of the fruit of the palm is thrown by means of a knife.

837 Note, finally, that the confession is restricted to married
783 women. It is never expected of a young unmarried mother. There-
853 fore it would seem to be a practice connected with marriage (a social institution) and not with childbirth (a physiological phenomenon).

This confession is called etato or lotato, from the verb
[192] -tata, "to confess," (for which the generic term, sanga, "to say," is sometimes substituted).

I was unable to find any reason for this practice other than that of avoiding the death of the child. It is evident, however, that this explanation does not exhaust the question, although it is entirely possible that the original and deeper meaning has been lost without leaving any trace in the minds of the present generation. [496]

3) During the entire duration of nursing, the mother must
853 not be separated from her child. For the usual circumstances of
933 daily life, this rule is broadly interpreted; but during sexual relations it is strict, and no exceptions or excuses are permitted. Negligence under these circumstances would inevitably bring about the death of the child by ndota as soon as the mother took it back. This rule holds for legitimate relations as much as for illicit ones. Therefore the mother must always keep her child at her breast.

953 4) If at some point during nursing, the milk no longer flows
[757] in sufficient quantity, the mother is given a potion consisting of
[278] the extract of the bark of the bolóngé tree (which has a fruit containing a very sweet milky sap). Then she eats vegetables called lotélé. (1)

1. The leaves of this plant are also ordinarily eaten as vegetables, but they are consumed especially by those who possess the modern magical practice known as boyaóli.

5) An accident to which the Nkundó attach great importance
[262] is the rejection or vomiting of milk into the mouth of an adult, even if the person affected is the infant's mother. Such a person